

# Perfect

Written by Danny Parker  
Illustrated by Freya Blackwood  
Published October 2015 by Little Hare

## Synopsis

The story of three loving siblings that take the reader on a journey through their perfectly carefree and peaceful day.

## Themes

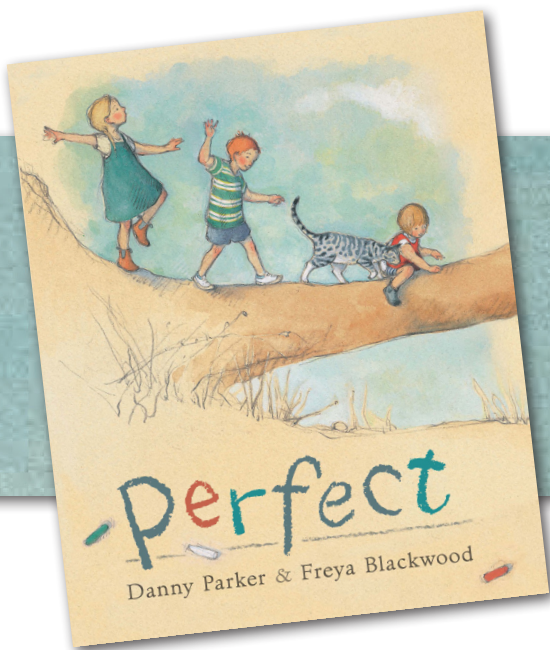
The purpose of this book is to create a specific feeling for the reader, and in some ways it might be better described as experience than as a traditional narrative. With its three carefree children occupying themselves with baking, drawing, roaming, reading and wandering through a summery, coastal-rural setting, it suggests a sense of idyllic freedom—a combined sense of responsibility, freedom and spontaneity that many children no longer have access to, but that everyone, no matter their age, longs for and imagines for themselves. Despite the total absence of adult supervision, there is nonetheless a powerful sense of safety and sanctuary, with the children taking devoted care of each other, and with a large motherly cat keeping a calm eye on all three.

## Writing Style

Writing in simple, rhyming couplets, Danny Parker has set out to create the mood of a perfect day. For Danny, this perfect day contains a series of enjoyable events that happen in a series of delightful settings. The text was inspired by his daughter, who once said that all she needed for the morning was 'some crayons and somewhere to scribble'. The rhythm of her request became the basis for the writing style (although the exact words were later changed). More importantly, the idea of an **action** combined with a **place** became the basis for the ongoing story. Although nearly every line describes a thing, an action and a setting, only one of the lines mentions a feeling. Overall, it is the reader who provides the emotion of this story. Danny has created a space in which the reader is free to experience his or her own *feeling* for the events on the page.

## Illustration Style

Freya Blackwood's illustrations are highly recognisable. However, although the style has been similar in her books to date, close inspection of her work reveals different visual techniques in every book, adjusted to match the mood of the writing, to build on the storyline, and to help communicate meaning. Even a seemingly simple book like *Perfect* is rich with visual complexity and detail. Using pencil and acrylic paint in a watercolour technique, Freya has set out to enhance the sense of peace, security, lightheartedness and



# Perfect

Written by Danny Parker

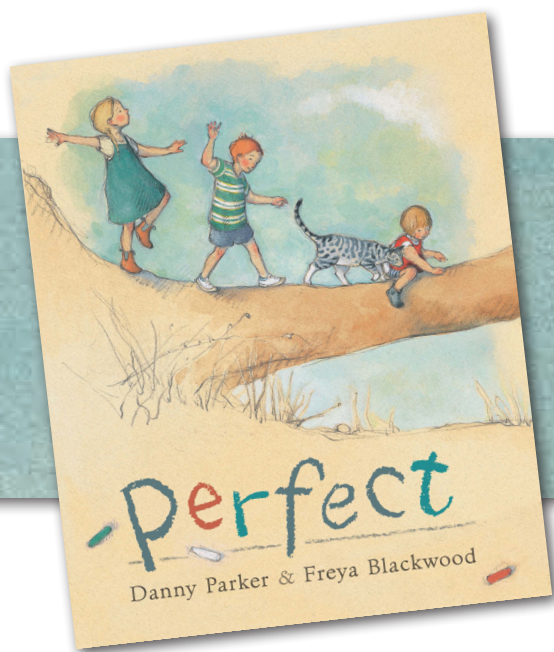
Illustrated by Freya Blackwood

Published October 2015 by Little Hare

freedom that Danny's text suggests. She uses clean, warm colours that suggest balmy weather and gentle sunlight. Even her night-time and wet-weather scenes seem warm, comforting and secure. Some of her spreads are single scenes, but others suggest movement in time and space by depicting several stages of an activity, such as going for a walk or playing on the beach.

## Study Notes

- At first glance, it seems that Freya Blackwood has simply illustrated Danny Parker's story. In actual fact, she has told several additional stories. Each of the three children act out Danny's words in different ways, according to their age. Choose one of the children and tell his or her story, from his or her point of view, in your own words. Share your stories with a group or with the class. How different are your stories from Danny's story? What does this tell you about picture-book illustrations?
- Danny Parker's text is intended to create a mood in the reader. Choose your three favourite pictures and describe the kind of mood that each picture makes you feel. Share your list of moods with the class. When everyone's list of moods is combined, what does this tell you about the overall mood of this story?
- The children in this book start their day at home. Then they head out into the countryside, down to the beach, and back home again. How does Freya Blackwood show the transition between home and the countryside? Write a paragraph that tells the story of this transition. Remember to think about the moods and feelings the children might be feeling at each stage.
- One of the spreads in *Perfect* has no text. Which part of the story is being told here? How is it being told? How do you know this is a part of the story, even though there are no words? Can stories be told in pictures alone? Find some picture-books in your library that tell their stories in pictures alone (these are known as wordless picture-books).
- Danny Parker has written his text in **rhyming couplets**. Each line has the same **rhythm**. How do you think this style of writing suits the story? What mood does the rhyme and rhythm give to the telling of the story? Have a class discussion about the difference between the mood of a story told in **rhythmic rhyme**, and the mood of a story told in prose.



# Perfect

Written by Danny Parker

Illustrated by Freya Blackwood

Published October 2015 by Little Hare

## Activities

- Re-write the story of *Perfect* as a writing activity. Ask students to choose their siblings or best friends as the new main character. Also have the students choose a few different settings and activities they love doing. After writing, ask the students to pair up and choose one scene from each students' book to act out.
- Whilst looking at the first spread, ask your students if they like to draw outside with chalk. Organise to draw a class mural at your school and have each student choose something to draw.
- Ask your class if they have ever helped out in the kitchen and what they did. Have a discussion about helping around the house and school.
- Discuss what are some of your students' favourite things to do when it's stormy outside. Do they like to curl up by the window and watch the rain? Or do they love to jump in puddles outside?
- Refer to the cat throughout *Perfect*. Discuss having pets – does anyone have a pet? What are the students' responsibilities in owning that pet? What are the fun things they do with that pet?